

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

13 November 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: South African Problems and Prospects

SUMMARY

A. The government of South Africa is ruthless, competent, and determined. Its security forces are well trained and equipped; their capabilities for maintaining essential public order are ample and are increasing. The economic situation of the country is at present unusually prosperous. The government has the support of the vast majority of the white population for whatever measures are necessary to maintain white supremacy.

B. We expect that the whites will remain in control of the country for some time to come--five years at least, and perhaps considerably longer. But there will be occasional outbreaks of violence and sabotage, and eventually perhaps a major bloodletting, arousing strong emotional reactions in the outside world. The US will be under increasing pressure from African countries to join in sanctions, trade boycotts, and perhaps more drastic measures of coercion against the South African government. We do not think that the government will in the near future make any appreciable changes in its racial policies, either in response to domestic developments or to outside pressures.

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I. CURRENT SITUATION

1. During the first months of 1963 the government of South Africa scored some remarkable successes in its efforts to suppress discordant elements in the black and white population. Police action led to the arrest of some 4,000 persons, most of them Africans. The leadership of the principal African organizations -- the Pan-African Congress and the African National Congress -- was for the time being rendered impotent. The tempo of sabotage declined, and white South Africans lost some of the anxiety which they felt about public security toward the end of 1962. It now appears unlikely that there will be any widespread disorder or mass demonstrations for some time to come, though there will certainly be sporadic outbreaks and occasional acts of violence.

2. In the economic field, the apprehensions of recession which were felt in South Africa during 1962 have given way to rejoicing at the appearance of a new boom. Higher production levels are reported in most sectors of industry. Virtually full employment exists with respect to white labor, and there is increasing anxiety about labor shortages, especially in skilled occupations. Gold production has set new records, and the total of South Africa's foreign exchange reserves is the highest in

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history. White immigration well exceeds white emigration. Foreign investment is flowing in, including a great deal of private capital from the US. Even in 1962, which was by post-war standards not a very good year, the gross national product rose by  $7\frac{1}{2}$  percent.

3. Meanwhile the South African government's racial policies have aroused renewed outcries from abroad. As reflected at the Addis Ababa summit conference, independent African states feel compelled to "free" their South African brothers. They succeeded in excluding the South African representative from a recent ILO meeting, and have endeavored to eject South Africans from other international forums. Above all, they have brought heavy pressure to bear upon the US and UK to join in punitive acts against South Africa under authority of the UN, and they appear to believe that these two countries could bring about rapid and enormous changes in the political and social system of South Africa, if they would but try to do so.

4. The South African government responds to outside pressures with defiance and contempt, and with an acceleration of its program of apartheid. There is not the slightest prospect that it will in the foreseeable future undertake any significant amelioration of its racial policy, though it has shown one or two signs of willingness

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to consider minor concessions. The white population of the country, even that part of it which is out of sympathy with the present government, is overwhelmingly in favor of the maintenance of white supremacy. It is prepared to use any degree of force needed, and probably a degree well beyond what is needed, to suppress any attempts to change the political and social order toward one in which black Africans would participate with an approach to equality.

A. The Bases of South African Intransigence

5. White men have lived and worked in South Africa for more than three hundred years. During nearly two of these three centuries there was little contact between white and Bantu, for there were few Bantu in that part of the continent which the whites had settled. As they moved north and east during the nineteenth century, the whites met the Bantu tribes, fought them, and took over part of the territory which these tribes had recently occupied in the course of their migrations from the north. The Afrikaners lived a pastoral and agricultural life, much isolated from the rest of the world. They were Calvinist in religion, and addicted to the grimmer passages of the Old Testament, including those which could be read as Jehovah's instructions that colored folk were forever to be hewers of wood and drawers of water.

6. Because of this history white South Africans do not think of themselves as "white settlers" or "colons," recently intruded into an alien society. They are angered by the suggestion that the land belongs to the blacks by some immemorial right; they consider that their own title is at least as well based as that of Americans to be in the US. They have no European home to return to. The Afrikaner -- the white of Dutch or French Huguenot descent -- claims that his society is ancient and organic, a veritable Volk, and indeed he feels that the English-speaking people, few of whom arrived before the early nineteenth century, have been intruded into his ancestral domain. All this accounts in part for the unusual degree of resentment which white South Africans feel at criticism from abroad.

7. As for the idea of racial equality, it is doubtful that it ever rose to the level of serious consideration until very recent years. The whites in South Africa fought the blacks from time to time, enslaved some of them, employed more, frequently maltreated them, sometimes befriended them, but certainly never contemplated admitting them to the rights and privileges of white society. Until lately the vast majority of the blacks had little contact with whites; they lived in their own areas in a state of nature. They were not a great problem, and the world at large was not interested in their fate. White supremacy was an unquestioned part of the order of things.

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8. Yet even in these circumstances one can faintly discern, through the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the outlines of an evolution which might in the very long run have led to political and social equality for all races. The "coloured" or mulatto people of the Cape Colony achieved a considerable degree of education and skill, and were even granted certain political rights. A few Bantu -- very few -- attained education or wealth despite all the obstacles and difficulties in their way. They were not denied higher education in white universities when they had managed to qualify for it, nor were they prohibited from professional pursuits and association with white organizations. A good number became capable of skilled labor.

9. With the rapid industrialization and modernization of South Africa, the demand for labor greatly expanded and the blacks migrated from their native habitats to the new cities. During the last two or three decades the migration has threatened to become a deluge. The blacks had long been a majority within the general territorial region of southern Africa; gradually they came to be a majority, and a great majority, within that part settled and civilized by whites. The urbanized African began to constitute a major problem. Among other things, he threatened to take good jobs away from higher-paid whites.

10. When the Nationalists came to power in 1948 they decided to do something sweeping and systematic about the racial problem. Their solution is well known: a thorough-going proclamation of the whole doctrine of racialism and white supremacy, withdrawal of what few rights and privileges had been acquired by non-Europeans, and, somewhat later, the policy of apartheid. This solution was far from popular with all whites, especially those of the English-speaking element. Virtually all believed in white supremacy, but many would have preferred it to be enforced in a decently unobtrusive manner, without excessive harshness, without ostentatious assertions of racialist doctrine, and with consideration for those non-Europeans who had raised themselves to a position which the whites could call civilized.

11. It is possible, though far from certain, that the extremes of the Nationalist government's policy would have been rejected by the white electorate before very long if there had been no pressure from the outside world. But when the aspirations of South African blacks, which were very moderately put forth, were dragged into public view and vastly intensified by the course of politics and propaganda abroad, the South Africans had to think again. They were faced with vociferous demands for a total revolution in their way of

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life and thought, to be accomplished immediately and at what they considered a vast and unacceptable sacrifice. They turned intransigent.

12. The prospect of "one man, one vote," or of anything approaching it, is flatly rejected by virtually all white South Africans. They believe that it would mean not merely the destruction of their own remarkably comfortable manner of living, but the ruin of a highly developed nation. The political and economic affairs of the country would be entrusted to an electorate much of which still lives in primitive tribalism, and nearly all of which is technically untrained and lacking the rudiments of a modern education. The best that could be hoped would be that by a long course of development the African proletariat might be prepared, as was the European in past centuries, to take a part in the management of affairs. For the present, however, rather than permit an immediate upheaval of the social fabric most white South Africans appear willing to accept even if reluctantly the policies of their determined, ruthless, and competent government.

#### B. Forces for Change

13. The harsh and rigid policies of the present South African government do not signify that South African society is static; on the contrary, change is rapid and pervasive in nearly all aspects of

the scene. The most inexorable force is that of economic development, which has in the space of little more than twenty years turned South Africa into a fairly advanced industrial country, producing roughly 80 percent of its domestic requirements for manufactured goods. Despite all the efforts of the government, this continuing expansion of economic activity persists in creating new demands for African labor, brings Africans to the cities to live near the white population, confers upon them new skills and accomplishments, and arouses in them new desires. The white population is not numerous enough to fill the requirements for skilled labor. The demands of the economy are incompatible with the more extreme regulations of the segregated society. The government itself has admitted that, as against its earlier hopes, a total geographical separation of race is out of the question for economic reasons.

14. It is probable also that white South Africans are changing their attitudes toward the black population about as fast as men can be expected to alter the basic acceptances of life. The government itself professes a hitherto undiscovered concern for the values of African culture, and is denounced by the right wing of its own party for spending too much money, giving away too much land, and paying too much attention altogether to the desires and sensibilities of the blacks. The policy of apartheid, however distasteful

to the outside world and to many South Africans, nevertheless represents the fruition of considerable thought on the racial problem, and a conclusion even by extremists that oppression is not enough.

15. The government's policies, together with the influx of blacks into contiguity with white society, have caused many white South Africans to examine the problem for themselves and to protest the official solution. Most remarkable is the strong movement among a minority within the Dutch Reformed Church -- once the very citadel of racialism -- denouncing apartheid as contrary to Christian principles. Virtually all of the English newspapers, and some of the Afrikaans, write vigorously against the government; so vigorously, indeed, that they are in serious danger of being suppressed by law. This is still not to say that any significant number of South Africans reject the notion of white supremacy. It is rather that a large number of them recoil when they hear it affirmed as a moral principle and observe it strictly enforced in all its ignominious detail.

16. Finally, there is the effect of pressure from the outside world. On the whole, South Africans resent this pressure and claim that those who apply it are either irresponsible and malicious, like

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the leaders of African states to the north, or lacking in "understanding," like the US. Yet it seems evident that South Africans are not wholly uninfluenced by the climate of opinion in the world, or altogether impervious to the prospect of being outcast from Western society. The government itself has many political and economic reasons for wishing to remain on reasonably good terms with the great nations of Europe and America. Many of the people are uncomfortable under the charges of inhumanity which are levelled at them. They would like to be recognized as the intelligent, progressive, and essentially humane people that they feel themselves to be. They contend nevertheless, with a good deal of justification, that their problem is unique, and that it cannot be settled by an immediate and sweeping application of the full doctrine of political and racial equality.

## II. OUTLOOK

17. For the foreseeable future, the capability of the South African government to suppress major disorders and to control the black population is beyond any serious question. The South African Police is a well-trained and well-armed body numbering about 28,000; about half of this force is white, including all the officers. There

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is no standing army in the usual sense, though about 7,500 Citizen Force draftees are normally undergoing basic and advanced training and the Citizen Force of approximately 30,000 partially trained and adequately equipped citizens is "on call" within 72 hours. A further 50,000 partially trained Commandos can be mobilized within two to four hours for service in their military command areas. Finally, some 170,000 untrained men could be mobilized within 90 days. All these forces are coordinated within a single security body aimed at suppressing any foreseeable civil disorder. The government is not in the least worried by any threat, during the foreseeable future, of armed invasion by African forces from the north, though it is much concerned about infiltration of agents, trained saboteurs, and weapons from outside the frontiers.

18. The government is now consciously directing economic development toward the attainment of greater self-sufficiency, especially in a strategic sense. This involves, at present, emphasis on the growth of secondary industry, so that a wider variety of requirements can be satisfied by domestic manufactures. It is currently evident, for example, in connection with the production of railway and motor vehicles, including armored cars for the military. This does not yet extend to the complete production of all needed

types of vehicles, but rather to the rapid increase of local production of parts which, together with a few imported items, are assembled into the finished product. South Africa is not very vulnerable to trade boycotts and the like; such boycotts would have to be virtually world-wide in scope to be anything more than a formidable nuisance to the economy.

19. We would expect, then, that for some years to come -- five at least, perhaps considerably more -- the whites will remain in control of the situation within South Africa. There will be sporadic violence and occasional acts of sabotage. There might be a major bloodletting, such as would arouse powerful emotional reactions in the world. But there can be no reasonable doubt of the outcome of such events within the country itself; the whites will overpower the blacks.

20. Meanwhile, however, the gradual evolution of society will continue, and can be controlled only to a limited degree by the government. The main forces at work have already been mentioned: industrial development which will inevitably increase the skills, the income, and the desires of the blacks; foreign pressures for change which also will almost certainly grow; and evolution of the thoughts and sentiments of the white population itself.

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21. It would be idle to suppose that a normal evolution of society in South Africa will go fast enough or far enough to satisfy either the Africans elsewhere on the continent, or the blacks in South Africa, or liberals in the rest of the world. Pressures and outcries are bound to increase. The government will energetically push its policy of apartheid. This policy will almost certainly fail to achieve its main objectives, and in time the failure will become increasingly apparent. Looking well ahead, in a speculative way, we believe that the real time of troubles for South Africa will come when present policies have failed, when doubts and questionings within the white population have increased, and when the ruthlessness and resolution of the present day have been eroded by uncertainty. Violent revolution will probably eventually come to South Africa, but it will come not when the rulers are at their most determined and effective, as they are now, but when they have commenced to relax and reform.

A. Position of the US

22. In some respects the present regime in South Africa is favorable to US interests. There are satellite tracking stations there. The government is as firmly anti-Communist as any in the world. It is convenient for the US to have the southern part of

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Africa controlled by a friendly power; it would be a sizeable nuisance, though not perhaps a disaster, to have a neutralist or pro-Communist government in charge. There are well over 600 million US dollars invested in the country, and the amount is growing. On the whole, the people and even the government remain friendly to the US, despite what they consider to be a long list of provocations arising from "misunderstanding." They believe that, given time, the new nations of black Africa will reveal such perversity and fecklessness as will persuade even the US that its real interests lie with South Africa.

23. Yet the US manifestly cannot support or condone the racial policies of the South African government. It might ignore them, in some circumstances, but this also has been rendered impossible by the African, Asian, and Communist countries, who have raised the subject in the UN and virtually compelled the US to take some kind of stand. Indeed, the US has committed itself to the proposition that the South African government's domestic policies are seriously disturbing international peace and security, and thus justify UN pressure to change them.

24. The US could go along for a while with the demands of African and Asian nations, joining in such measures as might be

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hoped would constrain the South African government into a change of policy, and accepting the unpleasant consequences for US relations with South Africa. This would, for a time at least, win the favor of black Africa. In our opinion, however, there is little chance that such a course of action would in fact bring about a change in the South African government's conduct, or lead to any appreciable amelioration of the condition of the blacks in South Africa. Verwoerd and his colleagues will not be moved by moral condemnation, moderate sanctions, or incomplete boycotts. It is extremely unlikely that the principal countries of Western Europe would cooperate in the kind of measures which would really hurt the South Africans. We would expect, therefore, that as lesser expedients proved unsuccessful, the Africans would press for ever stronger ones -- blockade for example, and direct military action -- and urge the US to require these stronger measures of its European allies. Sooner or later the US would find that it had neither changed the situation in South Africa nor retained the approval of other African nations for its attempts to do so. It would, moreover, have irritated European countries, and lost whatever advantages it enjoys from the good will of South Africa.

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25. The situation is thus difficult enough in present circumstances. It is virtually certain, however, that there will eventually be further violence in South Africa -- new Sharpeville incidents, a considerable number of blacks killed, along with some whites, and perhaps in the long run fairly large-scale slaughter. To the white South Africans such events will represent a legitimate though regrettable use of force to control disorder or suppress rebellion. To much of the rest of the world they will represent an intolerable offense against humanity. The US will have to decide its policy amid redoubled demands for international action to punish the South African government and redress the situation in that country.

26. Within the next year, moreover, the International Court of Justice will hand down a decision as to whether South Africa is properly fulfilling its mandatory responsibilities with respect to southwest Africa; quite probably it will hold that South Africa is not. Thereafter, even if the South African government offers some compromise in the matter, it will almost certainly not offer enough to be compatible with the Court's ruling, or to satisfy a majority of UN members. There will then be demands that the UN use force to uphold the judgment of the International Court.

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27. Taking all things into consideration, it is difficult indeed to discern any ray of hope in this dismal prospect. If the nations of Africa could be brought to understand that neither the US nor any other outside influence can force rapid change in the South African government's policies; and if they could also realize that premature outbreaks in South Africa can mean only disaster for the blacks; and if they could understand that undue pressure on South Africa will be counter-productive, while moderate pressure may be useful; and if the slow development of an African middle class in South Africa can be allowed to proceed -- thus the ifs mount up, and would have to be multiplied before one could terminate the sentence in a happy conclusion. There is at least some chance that if enough time is granted the development of things in South Africa may be fairly peaceful and humane; but no one can realistically estimate that the chance is better than slight.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:



SHERMAN KENT  
Chairman

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The DD/I

14 November 1963

The AD/NE

Attached Memorandum for the Director re South Africa

The attached has been forwarded to the Director with a request that it be distributed to the members of the Strategic Study Group on West Africa.

OPTIONAL FORM NO. 10

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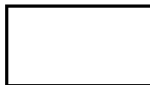
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# Memorandum

TO : The Director

DATE: 13 November 1963

FROM : The AD/NE



SUBJECT: Attached Memorandum for the Director re South Africa

1. This memorandum is not on a subject of great urgency. However, a Strategic Study on South Africa is now in its last stages of preparation under State Department direction (Walt Rostow's group), and the DCI may before long have to approve that Study.

2. We request authorization to distribute this memorandum among those working on the Strategic Study, and to a few others outside the Agency.

↑  
OK by DCI.

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